

Underhill Conservation Commission
Minutes
March 10th, 2014
Underhill Town Hall

Present: Trevor Squirrel (chair), Barbara Greene, Merianne O'Grady, and Pat Lamphere (potential new member!)

Opening remarks:

Trevor introduced Pat Lamphere to those of us present. Mr. Lamphere has served in many positions over the years for the Town of Underhill, and he expressed interest in becoming a member of UCC. For those of us present who did not know, Pat is a 7th-generation VTer, and his family roots go deep in Underhill where he grew up, and still resides.

Trevor reported that the Underhill Town Trails Committee is currently inactive. Several of the committee's members have expressed interest in our commission. Pat Lamphere was part of this Committee, as were Nancy and Howard McCrae. The latter two individuals indicated to Trevor that they are also interested in UCC, and may come to our next meeting.

Cranebrook Trail - update:

Per Trevor, the litigation on this land has finally been settled, and now the Town can move ahead with plans for the trail.

The Town Road Commission has developed a report on the trail project, and it will be available after the post-litigation revisions are completed.

In addition, the Select Board will implement a Town Trails Ordinance for Cranebrook Trail, detailing environmental and managerial protocols and procedures for access, for example, by adjacent landowners. Trevor suggested that owners could have access to the Trail via gate with a lock/key system so that there would be accountability and set time-limitations on such access. The Town could keep track of who has the key at a given time by implementing a sign-up sheet at the Town Hall. Per Town Administrator Brian Bigelow, UCC should also be involved in development of the Ordinance. Final approval of the document will be granted by the Select Board. Local invasive species and their removal should also be addressed in the Ordinance.

Pat inquired about the status of the current Underhill Town Trails Handbook. Trevor suggested that when potential new UCC members (from the now-inactive Trails Committee) are present, a possible standing committee could be formed to update the Handbook.

Green – Up Day (MAY 3RD):

As Trevor pointed out, Jim Beebe was in charge of this event last year, and has offered to do it again this year. Barbara indicated she sent Jim contact information for interested and/or potentially involved groups/organizations.

Plant Sale - (JUNE 7TH):

Barbara has been in contact with the Michigan nursery which has supplied blueberry plants for the sale for the past several years. Per Barbara, their 2014 price remains the same. @ \$3.55/each + shipping. Jim Beebe, (current UCC member not present @ this meeting) is employed with local blueberry supplier (Arcana CSA) and he has offered to compare the nursery's prices with Arcana's.

Pat suggested that we might also consider offering seeds and/or plants at the Sale which encourage local wildlife (for example the non-invasive variety of bittersweet vine). Trevor will speak with Jim re: this idea.

Invasive plants education/outreach project:

Trevor reiterated his suggestion that UCC offer a short educational lecture and workshop on local invasives the same day as the Plant Sale. Since the sale will probably end by 9:30 a.m., this activity could be scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Moore Park (which is right across the road from Town Hall and the Sale) would be a convenient location. Usually, there are at least 5 invasive species present there.

Trevor indicated that right off, he cannot think of a person (an expert on invasives) to lead this activity. Barbara suggested a knowledgeable Master Gardner could be utilized, and Merianne said she would contact UVM Extension professor Leonard Perry re: this. Trevor also reminded us that UCC has the funds to hire someone for this purpose if needed

Town Plan 2015 – Natural Resources section:

Trevor gave each member present a copy of the Natural Resources chapter from the 2010 Underhill Town Plan. This document is updated every 5 years. He has volunteered UCC to revise and update this section, as they have done previously. In 2010, the Underhill Regional Planning Commission reviewed the existing document (2005) and UCC edited it per their comments. Currently, there is no definite time-line for completion of a 2015 version, although we should probably have a working draft of the Natural Resources section available by October/November of this year.

Barbara inquired whether the issue of recent climatic events (Irene, Sandy, issue of 100-year natural-disaster events, etc.) and the resultant flood damage will be

addressed in the updated 2015 Town Plan. Trevor agreed that the local flood plains have been negatively impacted by such events, and therefore the flood resiliency issue of maintaining existing flood-plain land is critical. This should be a major focus of the 2015 Natural Resources revision. He pointed out that a fluvial erosion overlay is included in the 2010 document. In order to define this issue, detailed mapping of such areas also should be included in the revision.

Reportedly, this issue must be addressed in the Town Plan per State mandate. In the past, both storm-water runoff and septic-system impacts were overseen by both the Town Planning Commission and the Development Review Board. Now, the State is responsible. Pat pointed out that the State seems more interested in obtaining tax revenues, (which local development would provide), than protecting / preserving our natural resources. Thus, the State's concern (re: erosion, storm-water runoff, septic system design and the resultant consequences of such developments) do not seem to align with the objectives / mission of the UCC. Trevor reminded us that the Town Plan is a strategic document, and thus any revisions must first address the existing regulations therein before new concerns are dealt with. Barbara emphasized that the Town Plan needs to address the reality of "extenuating circumstances" which we have, and will continue to have, to deal with in the future.

Open Space Plan – next steps:

Trevor pointed out that the Planning Commission will be reviewing the Open Space Plan in the near future. After this occurs, then UCC will become involved. He will keep us updated on their progress. He emphasized that we can educate ourselves further on this topic by perusing the Natural Resources section of the Town Plan which we now have in our possession.

New business:

Per official Town mandate, Trevor will contact the Select Board and inform them of Pat's interest in joining the UCC.

Adjournment:

No other new business was presented, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Monday, April 14, 2014, 6:30 p.m., Underhill Town Hall

Respectfully submitted, Merianne O'Grady, UCC member

3/10/2014 **DRAFT**

Final
Trevor Squirrel 4/14/2014

